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BRIEFER ARTICLES

HENRY HAROLD WELCH PEARSON

(WITH PORTRAIT)

Professor H. H. W. PEARSON, professor of botany in the South African College at Cape Town, died November 3, 1916. He was born at Long Sutton, England, in 1870, and was educated at Cambridge, receiving the M.A. degree in 1900 and the Sc.D. in 1907. He was assistant curator of the Cambridge herbarium from 1898 to 1899, and then went to the Kew Gardens where he remained until 1903. From Kew he went to the South African College, where his principal work was done. His thorough training in taxonomy enabled him to utilize at once the opportunity of a rich and little studied flora, and he made numerous contributions to the *Flora of South Africa*, *Flora Capensis*, *Philosophical Transactions*, *Geographic Journal*, *Annals of Botany*, and other periodicals. His researches were not confined to taxonomy. There were ecological papers upon South African cycads and morphological studies of *Welwitschia* and *Gnetum*, two genera in which he was so deeply interested that he not only spent a great deal of time and money, but eagerly endured the hardship of collecting material in distant and almost inaccessible places.

In a letter dated September 8, 1916, he states that he has in press two papers on *Gnetum*, and that he was to make another trip to Damaraland in January to study *Welwitschia* and get material for further investigation. In the same letter he writes: "I don't think there is the least chance for peace before September, 1917. I wish I could get away from present occupations and take a part, but I am not encouraged by the authorities."

Five years ago, while studying cycads in South Africa, it was my good fortune to become acquainted with Professor PEARSON, and to be entertained in his home. He was a vigorous, kindly man, intensely interested in his work and enthusiastic over the botanical possibilities of South Africa. During a stroll on Table Mountain he pointed out to me a magnificent site for a botanical garden, at that time only a dream or a vision; but with him a vision was followed by meditation, and then by determined effort to make his dream come true. The visions which he saw during such strolls have materialized in the National Botanic Gardens at Cape Town, with an unsurpassed location, and with such a rapidly growing collection of plants that the place is already one of the great gardens of the world.

By his untimely death—he was only 46 years old—science has lost a great botanist, but it is to be hoped that his high ideals of scientific work will still remain to guide the botanical policies of South Africa.—CHARLES J. CHAMBERLAIN, *University of Chicago.*

SOIL MOISTURE INDEX

Outdoor botanists in thinking of any plant are likely to associate with it some measure of its soil moisture relation. The terms xerophyte, mesophyte, and hydrophyte naturally come to mind, or at least the conceptions that these names connote. With college students, however, no such association of ideas is likely to occur unless special attention is directed to the subject. This may be done by requiring the student to examine the habitat, note the associated species, and estimate the water requirements. Such a plan was tried the past summer at the University of Colorado Mountain Laboratory at Tolland, Colorado. For this purpose a scale, which may be called a "soil moisture index," proved useful. A rule of the laboratory required that every plant studied should be recorded with an index number, this to be criticized and perhaps altered by the instructor.

The index numbers form a scale from 1 to 10 with the following significance: (1) lithophytes; (2) plants of driest, sterile soil; (3) hyperxerophytes; (4) xerophytes; (5) xero-mesophytes; (6) mesophytes;